When April with his showers sweet with fruit

The drought of March has pierced unto the root

And bathed each vein with liquor that has power

To generate therein and sire the flower;

When Zephyr also has, with his sweet breath,

Quickened again, in every holt and heath,

The tender shoots and buds, and the young sun

Into the Ram one half his course has run,

And many little birds make melody

That sleep through all the night with open eye

(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)-

Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage,

And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,

To distant shrines well known in sundry lands.

And specially from every shire's end

Of England they to Canterbury wend,

The holy blessed martyr there to seek

Who helped them when they lay so ill and weak.

Befell that, in that season, on a day

In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay

Ready to start upon my pilgrimage

To Canterbury, full of devout homage,

There came at nightfall to that hostelry

Some nine and twenty in a company

Of sundry persons who had chanced to fall

In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all

That toward Canterbury town would ride.

The rooms and stables spacious were and wide,

And well we there were eased, and of the best.

And briefly, when the sun had gone to rest,

So had I spoken with them, every one,

That I was of their fellowship anon,

And made agreement that we'd early rise

To take the road, as you I will apprise.

But none the less, whilst I have time and space,

Before yet farther in this tale I pace,

It seems to me accordant with reason

To inform you of the state of every one

Of all of these, as it appeared to me,

And who they were, and what was their degree,

And even how arrayed there at the inn;

And with a knight thus will I first begin.

A knight there was, and he a worthy man,

Who, from the moment that he first began

To ride about the world, loved chivalry,

Truth, honour, freedom and all courtesy.

Full worthy was he in his liege-lord's war,

And therein had he ridden (none more far)

As well in Christendom as heathenesse,

And honoured everywhere for worthiness.

At Alexandria, he, when it was won;

Full oft the table's roster he'd begun

Above all nations' knights in Prussia.

In Latvia raided he, and Russia,

No christened man so oft of his degree.

In far Granada at the siege was he

Of Algeciras, and in Belmarie.

At Ayas was he and at Satalye

When they were won; and on the Middle Sea

At many a noble meeting chanced to be.

Of mortal battles he had fought fifteen,

And he'd fought for our faith at Tramissene

Three times in lists, and each time slain his foe.

This self-same worthy knight had been also

At one time with the lord of Palatye

Against another heathen in Turkey:

And always won he sovereign fame for prize.

Though so illustrious, he was very wise

And bore himself as meekly as a maid.

He never yet had any vileness said,

In all his life, to whatsoever wight.

He was a truly perfect, gentle knight.

But now, to tell you all of his array,

His steeds were good, but yet he was not gay.

Of simple fustian wore he a jupon

Sadly discoloured by his habergeon;

For he had lately come from his voyage

And now was going on this pilgrimage.